

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 129358

FOLLOWING REPEAT KINSHASA 5120 ACTION SECSTATE INFO BRUSSELS
PARIS LONDON MOSCOW HAVANA LUSAKA LUBUMBASHI BRASSAVILLE
POUCH NEW YORK BUKAVU POUCH RABAT MAY 21.

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 5120

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, PINS, CG
SUBJECT: SHABA ATTACK: SOME IMPLICATIONS OF KOLWEZI

REF: KINSHASA 5060

1. THE MASS EXODUS FROM KOLWEZI CONTINUES THIS MORNING MAY 21. I
HAVE TALKED AT LENGTH WITH SEVERAL OF THE AMERICAN EVACUEES. METHODIST

MISSIONARY AMSTUTZ AND HIS WIFE WHO WERE IN THE EUROPEAN RESIDENTIAL
QUARTERS; CATHOLIC PRIEST WAGNER WHO WAS AT THE BELGIAN COLLEGE
WHERE MORE THAN 100 EUROPEANS TOOK REFUGE; AND CATHOLIC PRIEST
MESSERICH WHO WAS IN THE AFRICAN QUARTERS. BASED ON THIS SPECTRUM
OF FIRST-HAND OBSERVATIONS, IT IS REASONBLY CLEAR
THAT:

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--THE ATTACK ON KOLWEZI WAS CAREFULLY PLANNED AND WELL IMPLEMENTED
;
IT INVOLVED SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF KATANGANS WHO CAME FROM BASES
IN ANGOLA;
--THERE IS AS YET NO FIRM EVIDENCE OF CUBAN OR OTHER NON-AFRICAN
PARTICIPATION;
--FAZ PERFORMANCE IN DEFENDING KOLWEZI WAS INEFFECTIVE;

- THE LOCAL ZAIRIAN POPULATION WAS GENERALLY APATHETIC;
- THE KATANGANS FOCUSED ON TERRORIZING THE EXPATRIATES;
- THE EXPATRIATES WILL ALL LEAVE KOLWEZI, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY.

ALL THAT WE HAVE HEARD SUBSTANTIATES THE THESIS EXPRESSED REFTTEL:
THAT THE KATANGANS OBJECTIVE WAS TO DRIVE OUT THE EXPATRIATES, SHUT
DOWN THE COPPER INDUSTRY, CRIPPLE ZAIRE'S ALREADY FEEBLE ECONOMY
AND BRING DOWN THE MOBUTU GOVERNMENT.

2. IN FACT IT NOW LOOKS AS IF KOLWEZI WILL SHORTLY BE A GHOST TOWN.
WE BELIEVE THAT FEW IF ANY EXPATRIATES WILL REMAIN. THOSE WHO ARE
LEAVING ARE UNLIKELY TO RETURN UNLESS AND UNTIL THEY ARE ASSURED
OF BETTER SECURITY (E.G. EUROPEAN TROOPS) THAN FAZ ALONE CAN PROVIDE.
THE EXPATRIATES HAVE NO CONFIDENCE IN FAZ'S CAPABILITY TO DEFEND
KOLWEZI AGAINST ANOTHER KATANGAN ATTACK, WHICH THEY CONSIDER LIKELY
ONCE BELGIAN AND FRENCH TROOPS WITHDRAW. KOLWEZI'S LARGE INDIGENOUS
POPULATION (APPROX. 150,000), FACED WITH NO WORK AND FEARING
RETRIBUTION
FROM THE GOVERNMENT, HAS ALREADY STARTED ABANDONING THE CITY FOR
THE BUSH. THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE THE KOLWEZI EVACUATION WILL
TRIGGER THE EXODUS OF EXPATRIATES ELSEWHERE IN THE COPPERBELT.

3. THE BROADER ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE KOLWEZI
ATTACK ARE EXTREMELY SERIOUS. ANY APPRECIABLE INTERRUPTION OF
COPPER PRODUCTION - AND THAT NOW SEEMS ASSURED - WILL HAVE A
SEVERE IMPACT ON ZAIRE'S FOREIGN EXCHANGE
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EARNINGS AND AGGRAVATE THE ALREADY DESPERATE STATE OF THE ECONOMY.
IMPENDING MEASURES OF REFORM AND RECOVERY, SUCH AS A NEW IMF PROGRAM
AND A NEW LOAN FROM PRIVATE BANKERS, ARE NOW PLACED IN DOUBT.
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN SHABA SEEM BOUND TO DETERIORATE.
IN THE DAYS AHEAD WE WILL BE ASSESSING THESE AND OTHER ECONOMIC
RAMIFICATIONS AND DEVELOPING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POSSIBLE U.S.
ACTIONS. BUT IT IS ALREADY EVIDENT THAT KOLWEZI WILL ADD A
NEW, URGENT DIMENSION FOR THE ZAIRIAN PEOPLE'S ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL PLIGHT AND CREATE INCREASED DEMANDS FOR ASSISTANCE
FROM ZAIRE'S DONOR/CREDITOR FRIENDS.

4. IT IS TOO EARLY TO TELL HOW KOLWEZI MAY IMPACT ON THE
DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE. THE ATROCITIES ARE NOT LIKELY TO ATTRACT
MUCH SYMPATHY OR SUPPORT FOR THE KATANGANS AMONG THE POPULATION.
ON THE OTHER HAND, FAZ'S FAILURE AND APPARENT LACK OF RESOLVE WILL
PROBABLY SERVE TO WEAKEN FURTHER PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN AND RESPECT
FOR THE MOBUTU REGIME, AND THE PROSPECTS FOR EVEN TOUGHER TIMES
AHEAD AS A RESULT OF THE COPPER CLOSE-DOWN SEEMS BOUND TO HEIGHTEN
ANTI-REGIME SENTIMENT. AGAIN, WE WILL BE ASSESSING THE POLITICAL
SCENE
CAREFULLY IN THE DAYS AHEAD; BUT AS WE CONSIDER POSSIBLE RESPONSES
TO ZAIRE'S ECONOMIC AND SECURITY NEEDS, WE SHOULD BEAR IN MIND THAT

MOBUTU'S POPULAR SUPPORT HAS GRADUALLY ERODED DURING THE PAST THREE
YEARS OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DETERIORATION, AND THE ADDITIONAL
PROBLEMS CREATED BY KOLWEZI MAY WELL SERVE TO WEAKEN FURTHER
HIS POLITICAL POSITION.
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